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Palestine: PGFTU Leader Held by Gunmen, Told to Resign

Brussels, 10 July 2007 (ITUC OnLine): Shaher Sae'd, General Secretary of the ITUC-affiliated Palestinian General Federation of Trade Unions, was today forcibly taken from a Nablus restaurant by masked gunmen, who threatened him and tried to force him to resign from his trade union position and to end his involvement in other Palestinian civil society organisations. Released after around half an hour, Sae'd refused to be intimidated by the gunmen's threats and intends to carry on fulfilling his trade union functions and maintain his involvement in the other social organisations in which he is active.

"This is an extremely disturbing turn of events, and with profound implications for all those supporting democracy and fundamental rights in Palestine and in the West Bank in particular", said ITUC General Guy Ryder. "The Palestinian authorities have a fundamental duty to ensure that all those involved in defending and promoting human rights, including the rights of working people, are protected from threats to their lives and the lives of those around them", he added.

In a letter today to Palestinian National Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, the ITUC calls upon him to "ensure that trade unionism, which is an essential part of the building of a democratic and independent state of Palestine, can be undertaken free of the threat of violence or coercion".

Founded on 1 November 2006, the ITUC represents 168 million workers in 153 countries and territories and has 305 national affiliates.

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